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ABSTRACT

A study in an urban public school indicated that the number and degree of discipline problems teachers faced in their classrooms were unrelated to the teachers' agreement with parents or students on disciplinary approaches, and were also unrelated to whether the teachers, their students, or the students' parents endorsed any of the three major schools of discipline. These three schools are identified as Interventionist, which is based on the belief that behavior is a result of external forces affecting the student: Noninterventionist, based on the notion that misbehavior is a result of students' unresolved inner conflicts; and Interactionist, based on the theory that good behavior is learned through contact with other people and their values. The Beliefs on Discipline Inventory was used to measure the attitudes of 183 seventh-grade students, 304 of their parents, and the 10 seventh-grade teachers in the school. The teachers also assessed each student as never, sometimes, or frequently a discipline problem. (PGD)

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The Relationship Between Discipline Problems and Teachers', Parents', and Students' Beliefs on Discipline

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Abstract

The Relationship Between Discipline Problems and Teachers', Parents' and Students' Beliefs on Discipline

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The objectives of this study were to ascertain whether teachers, parents, and students agree about classroom discipline methods and to determine whether the degree of agreement among the three parties was related to discipline problems in the classroom. Belief preferences were assessed using a 12-item forced-choice instrument. Teachers also rated the extent each student was a problem in their classes. Only student-parent agreement was found to be significantly correlated to student problems ($r=-.19$; $p<.01$). This study suggests that parent-child relations may have a greater bearing on discipline problems than the teachers' disciplinary beliefs.

The Relationship Between Discipline Problems and Teachers', Parents' and Students' Beliefs on Discipline

Although educators and parents alike see classroom discipline as a major problem(Feldhusen, 1978; Gallup, 1980), there is little agreement on what are the most desirable or effective solutions to classroom discipline problems. Teachers and other educators subscribe to approaches which conflict, from "behavior modification" methods to "reality therapy" to "teacher effectiveness training" methods. Parents' expectations of school discipline also vary. At one extreme, highly vocal parents call for strict discipline including the use of corporal punishment and school suspensions, while other parents reject strong discipline measures, taking schools to courts that have ruled in favor of students' civil rights(Harris and Fields, 1977; Manley-Casimer, 1978). Given this background, the purposes of this study were to determine whether teachers, parents and students in one community agree about discipline methods in the classroom and to learn whether the degree of agreement among these three parties was related to the extent of discipline problems in the classroom.

Theoretical Framework

Wolfgang and Glickman's(1980) theoretical perspective in which the numerous theories of classroom discipline were classified into three schools(See Table 1) was used in this study. The first of these schools of disciplinary thought is the Interventionists who view students' misbehavior as a result of inadequate directions, rewards or approval, drawing their rationale from the belief that human behavior is based on external supports, conditioning or rewards. The

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Insert Table 1 about here.

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resultant discipline approach is a directive and authoritarian manner of handling student problems. This school is represented by Blackham and Silberman(1975), Dobson(1970), and Madsen and Madsen(1970).

In contrast, the Non-Interventionists assume that misbehavior is a result of the students' unresolved inner conflicts which are resolvable when the students become aware of those inner difficulties. In this view, teachers do not impose their rules on students, but instead allow students to reason for themselves in solving problems. Students are expected to assume most of the initiative and responsiblity for making rules and enforcing them. Harris'(1969) and Gordon's (1974) approaches are examples of the Non-Interventionist school of thought.

The third school of beliefs, the Interactioninsts, believe that students learn appropriate behavior by confronting and encountering other people's ideas and formulating their own concepts of good behavior. Thus a reciprocal relationship between teacher and student is seen as the ideal prevention and solution to student misbehavior. Discipline is seen as negotiated, collaborative and joint responsibility between teacher and students. Examples of the Interactionists point of view include the methods advocated by Dreikurs and Cassell(1972) and Glasser(1969, 1975).

Granting that this classification system is somewhat arbitrary, and the boundaries between the three schools are permeable, teachers can be viewed as subscribing to the set of beliefs in one or more of these schools of thought.

Methodology

Instruments. The Beliefs on Discipline Inventory(Glickman and Tamashiro, 1980), which assesses the degree to which teachers endorse each school of disciplinary thought, was used in this study. The Inventory was a 12-item forced-choice measure in which solutions to classroom discipline problems are posed with the

respondents asked to select the solutions they are most likely to use. Each option corresponds to one of the three schools. The parent form and the student form of the Inventory identified the extent parents and students expected the teacher to use methods from the three schools of thought in solving classroom problems.

To determine the extent of discipline problems in the class, the teachers rated each student on a three-point scale("Is never a discipline problem," "Is sometimes a discipline problem," "Is consistently/frequently a discipline problem").

Subjects. The respondents were 183 seventh-grade students, 304 of their parents and the 10 seventh grade teachers in an urban public school whose enrollment was 93% White and 7% Black. The sample, which was 64% of the total students enrolled, was proportionately representative of the racial composition of the school.

Results and Discussion

Teachers', Parents', and Students' Beliefs. Teachers in this school did not agree with each other on their beliefs. Table 2 shows the number and percentage of responses each teacher gave for each school of thought. Overall, five teachers were primarily Interventionists(Belief A), four Interactionist(Belief C) and one (Classroom 5) split equally between Interventionist and Interactionist beliefs. No teacher was primarily Non-Interventionist(Belief B).

Insert Table 2 about here

Parents of students in this school mainly expected teachers to use an Interventionist approach to discipline and secondarily they expected teachers to use the Interactionist approach (See Table 3).

Insert Table 3 about here.

The seventh-grade students mainly expected teachers to use an Interactionist approach to discipline problems except in one classroom (#6), where the students expected the teacher to use the Non-Interventionist approach (Table 4). In all but that one class, students expected the teacher to use the Interventionist approach almost as strongly. In the one exception students expected the teacher to use the Interactionist approach only slightly less than the Non-Interventionist approach.

Insert Table 4 about here.

Although each group differed in their belief patterns, the overall differences among the teachers, students and parents were minimal. In Figure 1, the responses from all three groups are summarized according to school of thought. In general, all three groups endorse the Interventionist and the Interactionist viewpoints, and minimize the importance of the Non-Interventionist viewpoint.

Insert Figure 1 about here.

Discipline Problems in the Classroom. The number of students who were considered "consistent discipline problems" ranged from 2 to 4 per

classroom, except in Classroom 2, where the teacher reported no student was a consistent problem, and the teacher in Classroom 5, who reported 6 students in this category. Overall, this was a mean of 3.86% of the students per classroom (S.D. = 1.30). Endorsement in a specific school of thought whether by the teacher, by the student, or by the parents was found unrelated to the degree of problem each student was in the classroom (See Table 5). In general, these results suggest that regardless of belief patterns, teachers find students in their classrooms who are consistent discipline problems.

Insert Table 5 about here.

The Relation Between Problems and Degree of Agreement. Although one might expect disagreement in beliefs between teachers and students to relate to discipline problems in the classroom, the overall r, at - .11(n.s.) did not support this. Likewise teacher-parent agreement was not significantly related to discipline problems (r = - .14, n.s.). However, parent-student agreement was significantly related to student discipline problems (r = - .19, $p < .01$). Although the accountable variance is small, this correlation suggests that students who increasingly disagree with their parents on discipline beliefs are more likely to be an increasing greater discipline problem for the teacher.

Conclusions

In summary, the number and degree of discipline problems teachers had in their classrooms were unrelated to (a) whether they agreed with parents or with students, and (b) whether they, the parents or the students endorsed a specific school of disciplinary beliefs. Although these results may differ in another community or at another grade level, the

findings can be some reassurance to classroom teachers that their own beliefs on discipline are not likely to have been the source of discipline problems they have. However, agreement or disagreement at home between parent and child does seem to have a bearing on discipline problems in the classroom. The implication of this is that we devote greater attention to parent-child relations in our effort to understand the nature and sources of classroom discipline problems.

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Table 1

SCHOOLS OF DISCIPLINE

	Interventionist (Belief A)	Non-Interventionist (Belief B)	Interactionist (Belief C)
Student misbehavior results from:	Inadequate directions, rewards or approval	Students' unresolved inner conflicts	Unclear concepts of appropriate behavior
Approach to solving classroom problems:	Teacher is directive and authoritative; Teacher modifies the environment and reinforcers	Students are given the initiative and responsibility to solve their own problems; Teacher helps them clarify feelings	Collaborative, negotiated and joint responsibility between teacher and students
Dominant Role for solution played by:	Teacher	Student	Teacher and student equally
Examples:	C. Blackham & A. Silberman J. Dobson C. Madsen and C. Madsen	T. Harris T. Gordon	R. Dreikurs and P. Cassell W. Glasser A. Alschuler

Adapted from C. H. Wolfgang and C. D Glickman, Solving Discipline Problems. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1980.

Table 2

Teachers' Beliefs on Discipline

	Belief A	Belief B	Belief C
Classroom 1	5/42%	0/0%	7/58%*
Classroom 2	6/50%*	1/8%	5/42%
Classroom 3	2/17%	4/33%	6/50%*
Classroom 4	5/42%*	3/25%	4/33%
Classroom 5	6/50%*	0/0%	6/50%*
Classroom 6	1/8%	3/25%	8/67%*
Classroom 7	6/50%*	2/17%	4/33%
Classroom 8	3/25%	2/17%	7/58%*
Classroom 9	7/58%*	1/8%	4/33%
Classroom 10	7/58%*	2/17%	3/25%
Total (means)	4.7/40%	1.8/15%	5.5/45%

Note: Astericks(*) indicate the predominant schools of beliefs for for each teacher.

Table 3

Parents' Beliefs on Discipline

n = 304

	Belief A	Belief B	Belief C
Classroom 1	43.8%*	20.8%	35.4%
Classroom 2	47.1*	15.1	37.8
Classroom 3	39.8*	24.1	36
Classroom 4	48.6*	11.6	39.8
Classroom 5	48.6*	11.6	39.8
Classroom 6	47.3*	15.9	36.8
Classroom 7	49.1*	14.1	36.8
Classroom 8	43.6*	17.5	38.9
Classroom 9	47.2*	14.2	38.5
Classroom 10	51.9*	12.7	35.4
Totals	46.1%*	16.5%	37.3%

NOTE: Astericks(*) indicate the predominant school of belief in each classroom.

Table 4

Students' Beliefs on Discipline
n=183

	Belief A	Belief B	Belief C
Classroom 1	35.7%	25.5%	38.8%*
Classroom 2	35.8	20.1	44*
Classroom 3	34.7	24.2	41*
Classroom 4	27.7	28	44.3*
Classroom 5	27.7	28	44.3*
Classroom 6	21.8	39.8*	38.4
Classroom 7	35.4	21	43.6*
Classroom 8	30.4	25.1	44.5*
Classroom 9	37	24.4	38.5*
Classroom 10	36.4	23.6	40*
Totals	32.8%	25.5%	41.7%

NOTE: Astericks(*) indicate students' predominant school of beliefs in each classroom.

Table 5

Correlations Between Discipline Beliefs

and Degree of Student Problems

Student Problems and:	Belief A	Belief B	Belief C
Teachers' Beilefs	-.09	.04	.09
Students' Beliefs	-.04	.14	-.11
Parents' Beliefs	-.09	-.02	.01

Figure 1
Comparison of Teachers', Students', and Parents' Beliefs